
The Mystery Box - Part III

Early Perfin Research

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After gazing so long at so many covers and strips, I decided to put those to the side for a while to look at some other items that had caught my eye.

This lot contained four perfinned covers all addressed to Forrest Swisher. Each cover had a letter to Captain Swisher dated between March and April 1946. There was also a fifth letter (without cover) loose in the box. These were from The National Shawmut Bank of Boston (Figs. 2 & 5), General Cable Corporation (Fig. 6), Weed & Company (Fig. 1), Peoples Natural Gas (Fig. 4) and Aetna Life Insurance Company (Fig. 7). These letters identify, in varying degrees, each writer's company usage of its perforator. Some indicate on what mail the perfinned stamps were used. Some indicate on what denomination stamps the perforator was used. Some even indicated to what other companies, the company sent mail! Can you imagine, in this day and age, writing to any company and trying to successfully solicit a customer mailing list? These letters sent in answer, make interesting reading. Should some of them not be shown or readable, please send me a self-addressed stamped envelope and I will make copies for you to keep and read for your enjoyment.

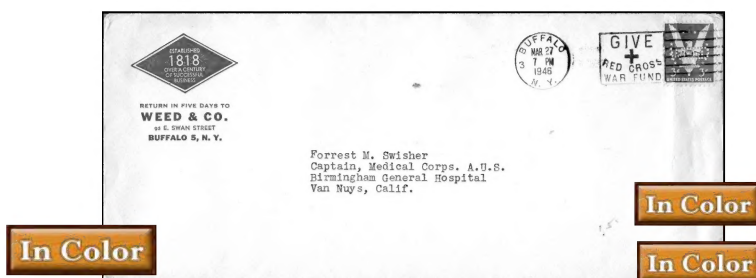


Figure 1: Weed & Co. (stamp with pattern W76) cover included a "Do not make envelopes for:" list.

There was a sixth letter from Western Newspaper Union (Fig. 3), in which the recipient sent Captain Swisher back his own letter with written answers.

As you can see by this letter, Captain Swisher gets right to the point stating that he is a collector of "perfins" and he goes on to ask the questions,

answers to which, many of us would like to know! I give Captain Swisher a tremendous amount of credit for his ingenuity. How many letters he sent or answers he received will probably never be known; but at least these have survived for posterity.

One of the first thoughts that crossed my mind was that here was someone collecting perfins around the time I was born! I wondered what kind of a perfin collection he possessed? Was this material possibly his collection? A possible answer will be theorized in the next and last part of this series!

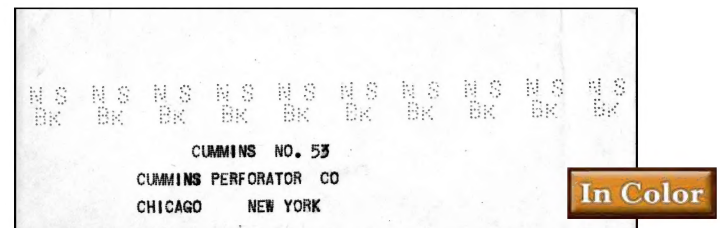


Figure 2: Enclosure from The National Shawmut Bank response (Fig. 5) showing 10 die head N145A.

I was able to find in some of the earliest Perfin Bulletins that a Forrest Swisher was a Perfins Club member but the trail was too old and documentation lacking to ascertain the exact years of his active membership. Might anyone have any knowledge of this gentleman? (see footnote)

Another thought crossed my mind. Here I had four covers mailed from perfin users with envelopes and letters, all mailed to a Perfins Club member! I recall seeing only two other such covers that were not "personal" perfins, one from Virginia Polytechnic Institute (V23) and one from Zion Church Designers and Builders (Z1.2) both addressed to Sylvia Gersch and both sold in the last Gersch-Walker-Pearson Auction. Does anyone else have any non-personal perfin covers correctly used and addressed to any members or former members?

Footnote: The lack of material documenting our Club's history was noted some years back by Dick Mewhinney at the time he was compiling the history

of the first years of our Club, "A History of the Perfins Club", that chronicles, as well as possible, the years up to 1970. When I spoke with Dick concerning his research project, he lamented that the lack of hard copy documentation from many sources made his a laborious project, much dependent upon

oral history of then living members. If you ever come across any documentation from our early officers, please contact Doug Turner, our Librarian. We would love to have that type of information! For some interesting reading, for a copy of "A History of the Perfins Club", also contact our Librarian!

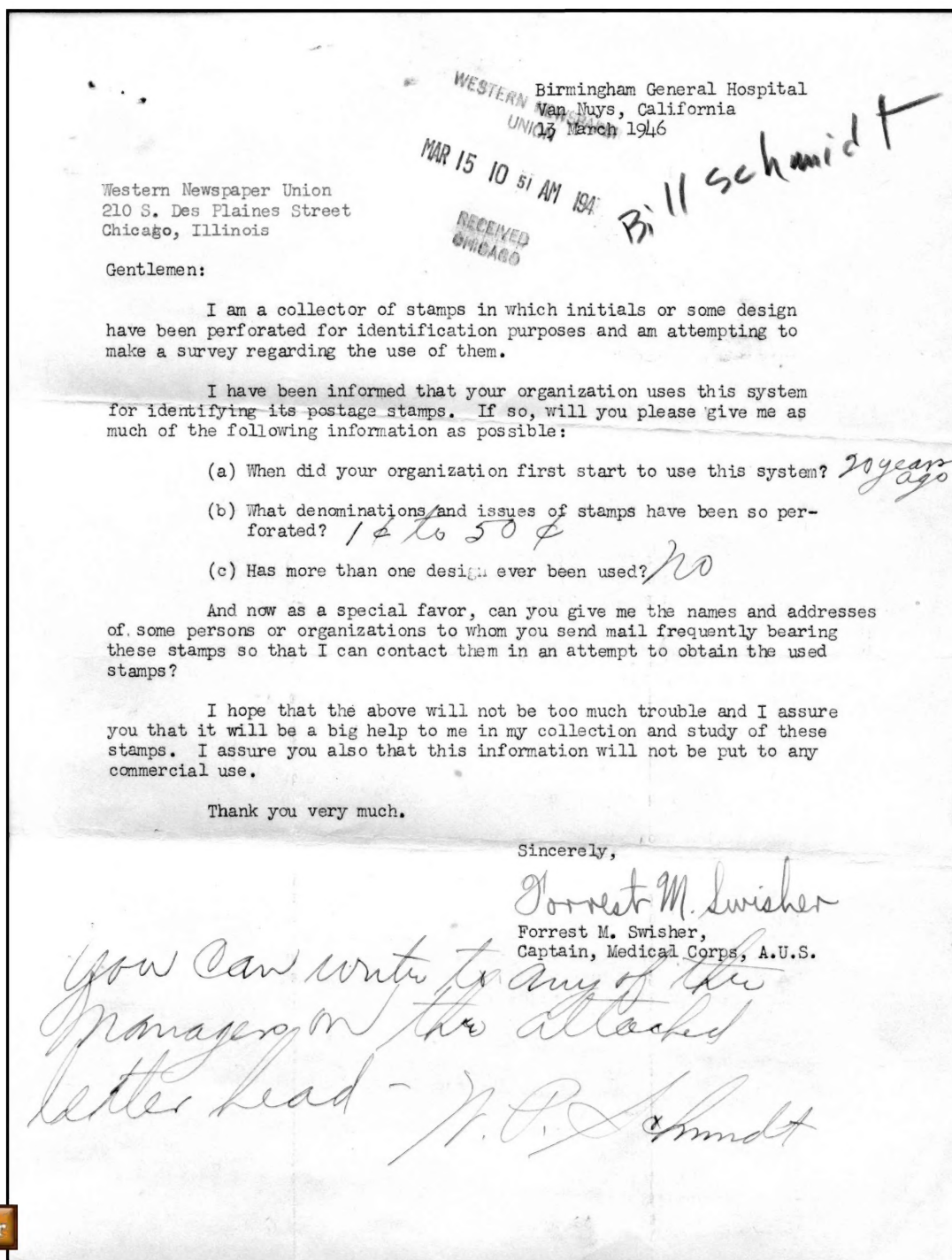


Figure 3: Response from the Western Union Newspapers on Forrest Swisher's letter requesting information about pattern .W142 or W143.

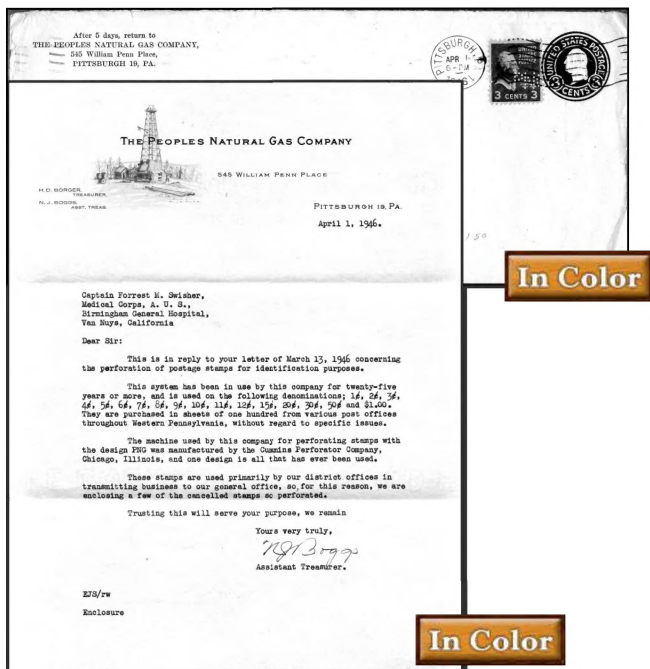


Figure 4: Response from the Peoples Natural Gas Company concerning use of pattern P153.

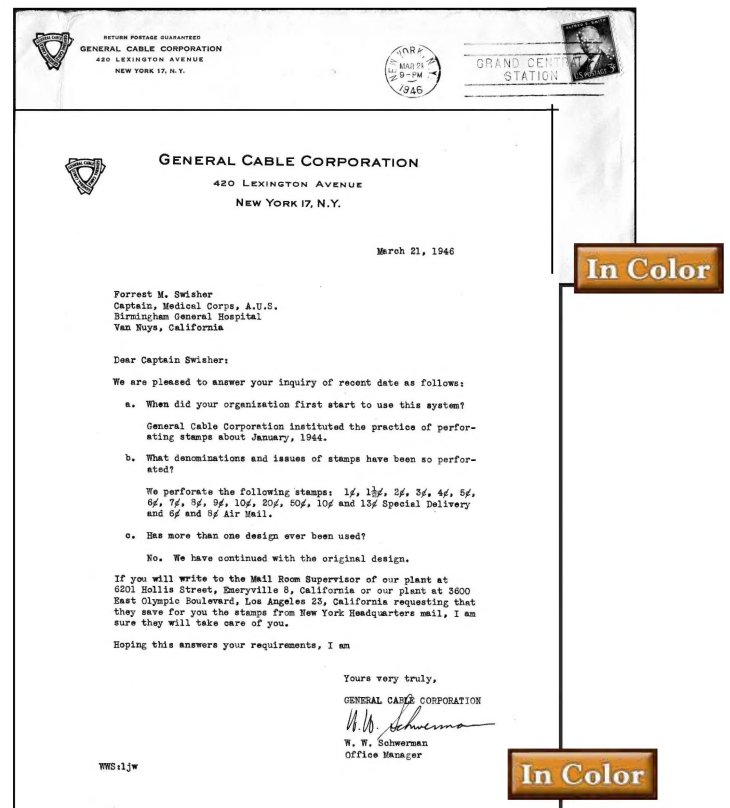


Figure 6: General Cable Corp. use of G51.

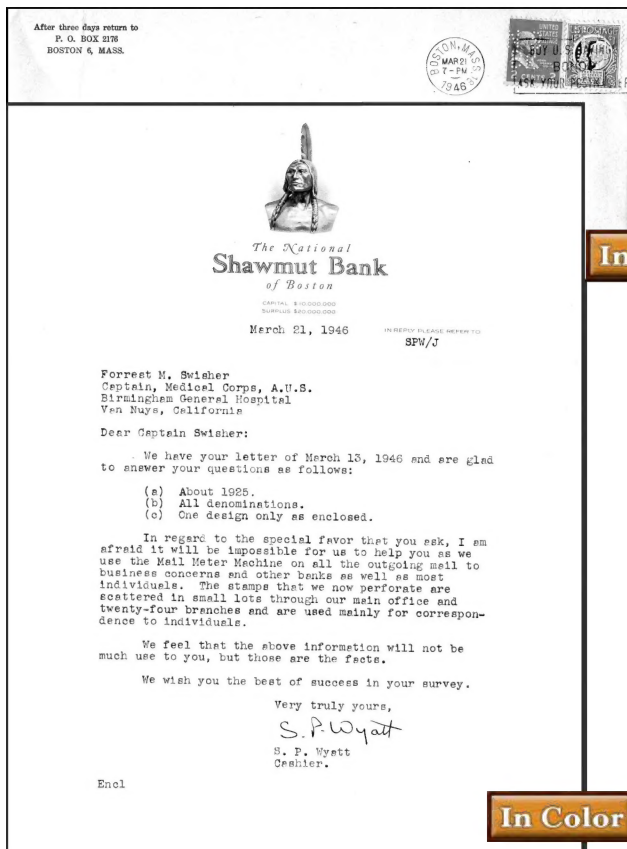


Figure 5: Response from the National Shawmut Bank concerning the use of pattern N145A (see Fig. 2).

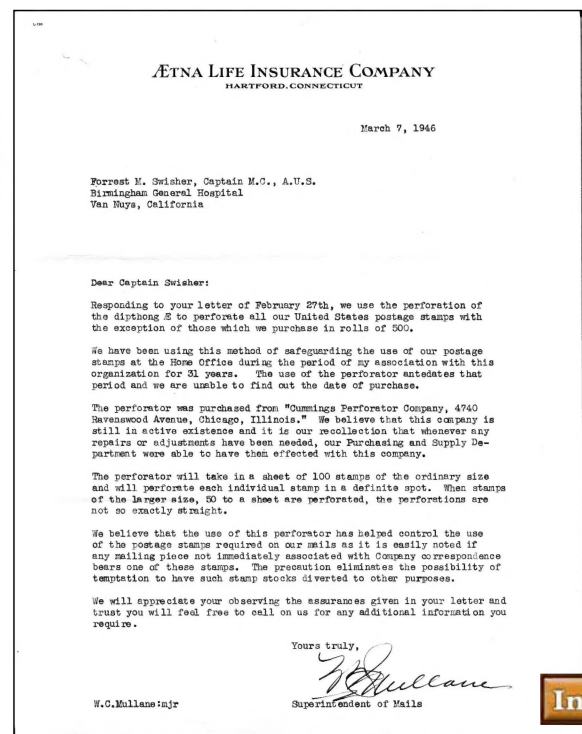


Figure 7: Aetna Life Insurance Co. response about perfin use. "All" stamps should include patterns A94, A95, A102 through A103A.